# Méli-Mélo

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# Méli-Mélo

by Shachaai

Summary

A guide to the world (biology, societies and cultures) of my Hannibal a/b/o series, *Plat du Jour*. (Covering, so far, the fics *Commencer Par La Faim* and *Picada Navideña*.)

# Preface and Contents

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

*PREFACE*

First and foremost, welcome! This is a general guide to the worldbuilding of many of my Hannibal a/b/o works, but, in particular, the world that is featured in my *Plat du Jour* series, which currently features the two works-in-progress, *Commencer Par La Faim* and *Picada Navideña* .

This guide assumes you have a general familiarity with the a/b/o (omegaverse, etc.) trope, and is not intended to cover all of the ins and outs of every a/b/o work ever. I'm sorry, but please look elsewhere if that's what you're hoping to read. This is just my interpretation of the a/b/o trope and how I've applied it to the *Hannibal* universe.

This work will be *frequently* edited - rather than updated - as I learn and decide upon more details for my a/b/o stories - and then manage to compile all that information here! I'll be keeping a list of the most recent updates in **bold** directly below this preface.

Whether you're completely new to my works or just *really* wanted to know more about a particular detail of my worldbuilding, if you've read this far and plan to continue, I hope you'll be entertained by what else this guide has to offer. The lengthy notes at the end of my chapters are something of a running joke to my readers and quite a lot of people have masochistically asked for more, so all *this* is just a further elaboration of *that.*

To finish this little introduction: everything featured in this guide is intended to entertain and inspire. Anyone is welcome to use any of the ideas featured here, but I would ask - *please* - that, if you do use something here that is very obviously and definitely mine in your own work(s), that you do give me some credit somehow. A great many of these ideas are unique and took a lot of time to research and write about!

I hope you enjoy.

- Shacha

**Update 13/06/24: All in *Biology, Gender and Dynamics* - added two new categories on *genetics and epigenetics* and *Heats, Ruts, Sex and Mating;* greatly expanded the category on *vocalisation* , and added a small amount to both the *eyes* and the *fangs and claws* categories.**

**Update 21/05/24: Things generally still quite disorganised. Posted all current chapters, complete *preface* and *contents* list (linked to relevant chapters). Complete notes on *scent***

***glands, genitalia, eyes, fangs and claws, hair, vocalisation,* and *fertility and pregnancy* in *Biology, Gender and Dynamics*. Incomplete notes on *language, social hierarchy and expectations, scents and scent-marking, collars, the 12 stages of formal courtship, family planning, medical,* and the *FBI* in *Western (Anglophone) Societies.* Complete notes on *general, scent* and *pregnancy* in *Japanese Society*. Notes on *language* in *French Society.* Brief notes on *Spain* in *Other Societies.* Brief notes on *mythology* and *art history* in *Miscellaneous.***

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*Méli-mélo:* (from Ancient Greek, honey-melon (apple)) An assortment, mishmash, hodgepodge (a collection of miscellany). In French cuisine, *méli-mélo* will be part of a

name given to dishes that offer contrasting, but well-matched tastes, textures, and colours in foods that are served together.

# Biology, Gender and Dynamics

*BIOLOGY*

*Genetics and Epigenetics*

All living organisms have DNA. Epigenetic ( *epi* 'over/outside/around' + *genetics* ) markers are small marks attached to an organism's DNA that can change how the organism's body reads the DNA sequence. (The markers tell the DNA what to do.) This is achieved by allowing and/or silencing gene activity and the subsequent production of proteins that guide the growth and development of an organism, direct and maintain cell identity, and allow for the production of primordial germ cells (PGCs; ova and spermatozoa).

Epigenetic markers can be considered like *switches:* many of them are reversible and can be switched on and off throughout an organism's life. Some markers are inherited from an organism's genetic parents, and some markers are developed/inherited *in utero.* Things such as an organism's health, diet and fitness levels throughout life can affect their epigenetic markers (i.e, switch them on or off). One study discovered a particular marker that was referred to as 'the trauma marker' in popular media due to it only being switched 'on' in those individuals who have suffered some kind of major/extreme trauma (either mentally or physically - wars, famines, PTSD, extreme depressive episodes…etc.). Additionally, the lifestyles of an organism's *genetic parents* can also affect how the epigenetic markers first or permanently present in their offspring. Another study showed that mothers who were pregnant during the great Dutch Famine gave birth to children with a particular marker that meant those children were more prone to heavier weight across their lifetimes (amongst other health-related issues).

Amongst other effects, epigenetic markers can affect an individual's likelihood of issues with mental health, physical health (especially pertaining to the development of issues with organs such as the heart, liver and kidneys), weight, and with the length of an individual's lifespan.

How does this tie into the interaction between alphas, betas and omegas? Largely, it affects bonding, mating, and the genetic traits of offspring.

The study of epigenetics is still considered a fairly young science - it only seems to have really taken off since 2008 -, but even prior to its discovery there was a general understanding that bonding/mating affected the biology of the individuals involved. After bonding, the scents of the bonded individuals change to resemble each other's more, mental and physical health generally improves, and bonded individuals have a much higher emotional and situational awareness of one another (the latter commonly referred to as 'the psychic link'). The effects have always been strongest in alphas and omegas, but betas are not wholly immune.

It has been discovered that humans possess what is known colloquially as ‘the mating marker’. A mating bite - a bite applied to at least one of an individual’s scent glands that is biologically accepted/tolerated by the host - switches this mating marker from its natural ‘off’ position to ‘on’.

The biological result of the mating marker being switched ‘on’ is finally an explanation for the long-held, fairly global, belief that the genetic offspring of mated alpha/omega parents are stronger, healthier, and more intelligent individuals than those born to other parents. Just as having the mating marker ‘on’ improves the health and lifespan of their parents, individuals born to parents with mating markers ‘on’ tend to inherit a higher portion of advantageous genes and epigenetic markers from their parents in regards to their health and mental acuity.

It seems that this positive benefit is gained whether the individual’s parents were mated at the time of conception or whether the biological mother is mated (by that individual’s biological sire *or* another individual) during pregnancy. The mating marker’s effects, then, must be passed along *in utero* to an individual’s offspring. The benefits of having an omega as a biological mother must also be acknowledged: as alphas and omegas are more easily bonded than betas, and omegas are much, *much* more likely to be capable of carrying offspring, omegas are the most likely individuals to be both mated *and* biological mothers - thus able to pass on the particular epigenetic benefits of the switched-on ‘mating marker’ to their offspring.

Studies have not yet concluded if the biological sire (whether alpha or beta) *also* being mated creates similar or greater biological advantages for offspring, whether the biological sire being mated *to* the biological mother matters (whether the mother is mated or otherwise), or what happens when only the sire is mated and the mother is not.

*Scent Glands*

In relation to human (rather than other mammalian) biology, scent glands are exocrine glands in the body that strongly emanate an individual’s scent - more than any other part of the body. They produce thin but semi-viscous secretions (colloquially referred to as ‘oils’ in most languages) which contain pheromones and other semiochemical compounds. These odour-messengers indicate information such as dynamic, mood, health and sexual behaviour, and may be either overt or almost entirely subliminal (not consciously detectable).

A pheromone (from Greek *phero* "to bear" + *hormone* from Greek – "impetus") is a secreted or excreted chemical factor that triggers a social response in members of the same species. Pheromones are chemicals capable of acting outside the body of the secreting individual to impact the behaviour of the receiving individual - in humans, aiding in finding and attracting mates, marking territory, altering the mood of company, and dominating an area.

In humans, all scent glands are ovoid and found close to the surface of the skin. Their slight swell may be felt by applying light pressure at their location.

The major scent glands are found in the neck, where the shoulder meets the neck. These are the largest scent glands in the body, approximately 2 inches in diameter at their largest.

Minor scent glands are found in the wrists and thighs.

Betas usually have smaller scent glands than alphas and omegas. This means they, also usually, have less prominent scents than alphas and omegas (and are naturally able to scent less than alphas and omegas).

Scent glands become more prominent when an individual is either sick, aroused, or holds their neck at particular angles.

Having one's scent glands licked or teethed at feels nice - and doing so is used as a placatory or enticing gesture between mates, or a self-soothing gesture for very young children when they do it to their parents/very close family members.

Generally, having the scent gland rubbed or otherwise stimulated is arousing. The scent gland - feels like it - throbs when the individual is aroused.

*Genitalia*

Genitalia does not wholly determine gender, but there does tend to be a correlation between one's genitals and one's gender identity as the majority of people are cisgender and cisdynamic. Trans individuals - transgender and transdynamic exist (as do those who are both transgender *and* transdynamic) - and are, globally, a significant minority.

Alphas tend to have larger penises than betas or omegas. Male alphas tend to have larger penises than female alphas.

Of the main dynamics, the sexual discharge of omegas tends to be considered the better-tasting, their innate sweetness tempering most ill-effects caused by poor diet or unlucky genetics.

Omegas' slick tastes faintly of their scent.

*Eyes*

The eyes of alphas and omegas both 'change' colour as a response to intense emotions (such as fear, anger, elation or arousal) or pheromones produced by others. Norepinephrine rises in the individual's system, triggering the optic and oculomotor nerves to direct the muscles around the eyes to dilate the pupils. This thins the stroma layer of the irises at the same time, allowing the colour of the heavily pigmented epithelial cells below the stroma and the tapetum lucidum behind the retina to show through. The individual's tear ducts and orbital sockets often briefly 'prickle' or itch during this process.

An alpha's epithelial cells are red/brown, tinting their vision with a pinkish/reddish hue when exposed.

An omega's epithelial cells are gold/yellow, tinting their vision with a yellowish/goldish hue when exposed.

The altered vision is slightly blurred but hyper-focuses on heat sources and movement, and is believed to be an evolutionary response to detect danger and find/keep mates close during heat or rut. Due to the tapetum lucidum, alphas' and omegas' eyes reflect light when shifted to red or gold (reflecting slightly less when in their 'normal' state) and appear to glow in the darkness.

The red/gold colour bleeds back out of the irises (i.e, the stroma layer thickens and returns to normal) after emotions settle and heart rates slow.

Due to the strong red/brown pigmentation of the epithelial cells behind the stroma in alphas' eyes, there is nearly *always* a red-brown tint in an alpha's irises after presentation. This means that those alphas with naturally lighter-coloured stroma (blue, grey, light green) in their irises will still appear to have much darker colouring in their eyes. After presentation, most alphas who had blue-grey eyes as children will tend to have much greyer or almost purple eyes. An alpha who has presented and still has clear, bright blue eyes as an adult is *very* rare.

Betas' eyes do not 'change' colour in response to intense emotions, though they share the dilatory response of the pupil with the other dynamics.

*Fangs and Claws*

Technically, everyone has fangs and claws, but the terms are usually reserved for the teeth and nails of alphas and omegas, as those dynamics tend to have the sharpest. Of alphas and omegas, omegas - including unpresented ones - tend to have the sharpest, and these can quite easily cut through flesh.

Though no-one knows *why* omegas have the sharpest fangs and claws, it has been argued that omegas need them the most in nature to defend themselves from unworthy suitors and other dangers. As an omega's claws grow faster during pregnancy - a time when an omega is arguably at their most vulnerable -, there might be some truth in the idea.

It is assumed that (obviously non-alpha) children with particularly sharp fangs and claws will eventually present as omegas.

An individual's fangs can be used to communicate mood, bared to other individuals when playful or angry.

*Hair*

Males who present as omega tend to grow facial hair more slowly than those designated other dynamics, and pregnancy hormones slow down the growth even further. The hair on pregnant omegas' heads, however, grows thicker, longer and shinier.

White alphas tend to grow body hair faster than any other dynamic, and male white alphas especially.

*Vocalisation*

Alphas and omegas express - and are capable of expressing - more vocalisations on average than betas.

In humans, a snarl is categorised as a low, guttural and/or growling sound that begins in the back of the throat and emanates from the mouth with the baring of fangs/teeth. The sound can be quiet or loud, but always sounds rough, ragged, and unhappy/displeased/hostile.

Both alphas and omegas snarl when angry or as a defensive response. It was initially *thought* for centuries that omegas snarl much less than alphas, but modern research conducted by less-biased parties has shown that that is not the case and it is only the *situation* in which a snarl is evoked that differs between the dynamics.

Alphas are much more prone to snarling in public when angered and as an open threat to other alphas and betas. Alpha snarls are rarely directed at omegas unless an omega is an open threat or has severely overstepped.

Omegas are prone to snarling in more private scenarios: against other omegas, as a territorial warning over mates, children and property, or towards anyone when the omega is feeling threatened. A doctor/psychiatrist's omega patient might snarl at them as part of a trauma response.

An omega's snarl is often at a slightly higher pitch and lasts longer than an alpha's snarl, and it is considered deeply wounding for an omega to snarl at an alpha or beta/a sign that someone has highly upset them.

In humans, a hiss is a sharp sibilant sound made by pushing air out between one's teeth/fangs and/or lips. Alphas, betas and omegas can all hiss, but the sound tends to be more pronounced in alphas and omegas.

Hissing is often a sound of anger and/or reproach.

Alphas, betas and omegas can all whine - and, in adults, the sound is usually reserved for moments of upset and mental and/or physical hurt. Children whine more often than adults.

Omegas in particular are known for *trilling.* The sound is a high-pitched rolling noise made at the back of the throat and across the roof of the mouth. In adult omegas trilling is often a small, inadvertent noise of startled delight, or *more often,* brief, indignant, and repetitive rolling noises that are a threat when the omega is displeased: an omega warning of old.

In humans, chirps are short, often quite sweet, sounds made between tongue, lips, and the upper roof of the mouth. Both children (of all dynamics) and omegas are known for *chirping,* making one singular chirp at a time (unless the one making the noise is very young). The

pitch of the chirp indicates the mood it is intended to convey: higher chirps usually express pleasure and pleased surprise, whereas lower-pitched chirps express indignation and disgust.

Alphas and betas can also chirp: betas very rarely, and alphas usually only chirp when interacting with young children (in particular their own offspring).

A chirrup is essentially a two-tone chirp. It is nearly always a happy noise, and chirrups are made almost entirely by omegas and children.

In humans, purring is a low, continuous, reverberatory and *reassuring* sound that is made in the back of the throat and vibrates in the chest. Both alphas and omegas purr. Children usually cannot; their vocal cords are not developed enough prior to presentation.

Purring is usually a sound made by the content, as a sound of pleasure - or to comfort and/or please others. Usually something in particular evokes a purr. Purring is often used when in the presence of mates, children, or very close family and friends.

Happy alphas and omegas can purr in their sleep.

*Heats, Ruts, Sex and Mating*

Omegas, amongst all dynamics in humans, have a very particular oestrus cycle referred to as ‘the heat cycle’, with its periods of sexual receptivity and fertility known as *heats*. These periods occur far fewer times annually than they do on average for beta women, but the likelihood of an omega becoming pregnant during the fertile window is much higher. The average adult omega will have a heat 4-6 times a calendar year.

A few situations can cause an omega to have an unexpected heat and/or to have more heats than usual annually. An omega going into heat can trigger other omegas nearby to go into an early preheat or heat. Exposure to an alpha in rut can trigger an omega to go into heat.

The short period of time - usually around two weeks - before a heat is known as *preheat.* This is the period where the omega begins to feel a chemical imbalance in their bodies building up to their heat, and biological responses such as an increase in scent and pheromonal output, increased libido, increased slick production, raised body temperature, heightened emotions, heightened aversion to strangers/bright lights/open spaces, increased fatigue, increased sweating, headaches, and aches and pains are common. The appetite is stimulated to encourage the omega to consume more calories before the energy-draining heat occurs, and stress levels are often raised to encourage the omega to find somewhere safe (such as a nest)

to spend their heat. The increase in scent/pheromonal output and libido assists the omega in finding a partner to spend the heat with.

Alphas have similar periods of heightened virility known as *ruts,* though the annual occurrence of these varies much more wildly in alphas than heats do in omegas, perhaps 4-24 times a calendar year.

Ruts can also be triggered in alphas much more easily than heats can in omegas. Quite a few situations can trigger an unexpected rut, such as mass aggression in a group of alphas, other alphas nearby going into rut, or an alpha being exposed to an omega in heat/an omega they are sexually interested in.

The short period of time - usually around two weeks - before a regular rut is known as *pre-rut.* During this period, alphas experience moments of heightened aggression and libido, increased production of Cowper's fluid, heightened emotions, raised body temperatures, increased stress levels, increased sweating, headaches (migraines), and an increase in scent and pheromonal output. The appetite is stimulated to encourage the alpha to consume more calories before the energy-draining rut takes place. During pre-rut, alphas often feel compelled to dress up and show off for others, usually to entice or keep a partner/mate to spend their rut with them.

General stress or health issues can cause unpredictable heats in omegas, or unpredictable ruts in alphas.

Being near someone in heat makes others feel warm regardless of their dynamic. The body temperature is raised and thoughts become somewhat clouded.

Heat smells and tastes like a hot musky sweetness across the roof of the mouth, sticky and wet. Omegas going into heat get very flushed in the face and down the throat. Their temperature spikes even higher than it already has from preheat, and there is an abrupt and spiked increase in the production of both sweat and slick.

*Fertility and Pregnancy*

An omega's fertility drops dramatically outside of their heat - but almost all omegas are still incredibly fertile on one side or the other of their heats, and can still, very, *very* rarely, be

impregnated even outside of that time period.

It is generally believed that children of omegas are healthier, smarter and stronger than those of betas - and this belief is *ancient.* No truly definitive study proves this, though the recent studies into epigenetics and dynamics are beginning to shed new light in this area and suggest the old belief might be true .

Even before the average person will detect the pregnancy in their scent, a pregnant person's pheromones promote feelings of calmness and protectiveness in others: a biological defence mechanism meant to protect the mother and the foetus growing in their womb by reducing aggression nearby and towards them. Omegas, who have fewer fertile periods annually than beta women, naturally produce stronger pheromones when pregnant on average than beta women - though the studies are still debating whether that is because omegas tend to possess stronger, more pheromone-laden scents in the first place, or whether omega biology is more defensive of its pregnancies due to their more infrequent nature in comparison to betas.

Those who are closest to the pregnant person - omega, beta, other, it does not matter - are always the most strongly affected by their pheromones, and *ingesting* them is a guaranteed way to induce calmness.

Of course, even ruling out accidental injury, should someone be intent on harm, calming pheromones alone will not protect a pregnant person. Such strong base impulses are not easily overridden; like hypnosis, an individual cannot be coerced by such methods to do - or not do - anything they would not have done beforehand. But should an individual be open to persuasion…

Levels of prolactin, the hormone which stimulates the enlargement of mammary glands and the production of breast milk, tend to rise more slowly and at a much later point in pregnancies for male omegas than for other genders capable of becoming pregnant.

A cisgender female beta cannot get an omega pregnant. In very, very particular cases, an omega male could get a female beta pregnant, but it's so rare it's not rarely thought about.

During pregnancy cardiac output increases by 30 to 50%. As the amount of blood pumped by the heart increases, the resting heart rate of the pregnant individual speeds up from the average pre-pregnancy rate of approximately 70 beats per minute to 80 or 90 beats per minute.

# Scents and Scenting

[to be added later]

# Nesting and Denning

[to be added later]

# Western (Anglophone) Societies

*LANGUAGE*

The English language is highly gendered around both primary and secondary genders (dynamics).

Those who biologically sire a child - or *can* (at least theoretically) biologically sire a child, and are raising one - are called fathers. Those who can at least theoretically give birth and are raising a child are called mothers.

Cisgender and cisdynamic alphas are identifiable from birth due to the knots at the base of their penises. Because of this, North American male alphas are styled as Mr. (mister) from birth, even before presentation.
North American female alphas are styled as Ms. from birth, even before presentation.
Alphas in English-speaking countries elsewhere nearly always refer to male and female alphas as Mstr. (master) and Miss. respectively until an individual presents as their dynamic in adolescence. (There are some exceptions should an individual become master of an estate or receive some other title before adolescence.)

A male beta is styled as Mstr. (master) as a child, and Mr. (mister) after they fail to present as another dynamic during adolescence. Even if a DNA test is done to discover they are a beta before this point.
A female beta is styled as Miss. as a child, and will remain a Miss after they fail to present as another dynamic as adolescence. Even if a DNA test to is done to discover they are a beta before this point. They may choose to change their form of address to Mrs. (Missus) after marriage/mating.

A male omega is styled as Mstr. (master) as a child, and remains as Mstr. throughout their life.
A female omega is styled as Miss. as a child, and remains a Miss. throughout their life unless they choose to change their form of address to Mrs. (Missus) after marriage/mating.

*SOCIAL HIERARCHY AND EXPECTATIONS*

Alphas are often insulted at being bossed around by betas, who they perceive as beneath them.

A beta's role is often perceived as being the mediator and bridge between alphas and omegas. They are believed to have calming presences in general.
In times of old, betas were often left as custodians of land and property whilst the alpha masters and mistresses were away.
'B-positive' is a slur for a beta trying to be like an alpha.

Society still seems to infantilise omegas.
It is assumed that omegas are the most submissive and empathetic of all dynamics due to their *naturally nurturing and empathetic instinct.*
The omega is always going to be blamed by society if a relationship with an alpha trying to court/pursue them romantically doesn't work out (i.e, the omega led an alpha on).
Young, pretty, poor male omegas can find themselves in trouble from older, wealthy individuals looking to take advantage of them.
Fixing boat engines - doing manual labour - is not something expected for pretty omegas.

Society forgives eccentricity a little more easily in the rich - older alpha women pursuing young men regardless of their dynamic, for example.

*SCENTS AND SCENT-MARKING*

It's not polite to scent/smell people openly without permission.

It is considered extremely rude to make a face at someone else's scent.

Good friends randomly scent and scent-mark each other with hands, wrists and cheeks all the time as well as family and long-term lovers. It's a casual, common display of affection and comfort. Rubbing your cheek on something makes it smell like you, and is often a thoughtless self-soothing technique for children.

A higher degree of intimacy is required in the UK than it is in the USA for friends and family to scent each other.

Rubbing cheeks together - scent-marking - is a sign of care and affection. The action rubs one's oils on the other person's cheek and throat - that can then be tasted if a lover or young child licks them.

Scent-marking someone - or their possessions - without permission is rude.

Offering other scented clothing/items is a form of protection.
It's a big social *faux pas* to give people scented items as a gift without being a certain level of intimacy. Especially not well-worn, *heavily* scented items of clothing. It's very personal.

*COLLARS*

Omegas often - and are encouraged by certain sects of society to - wear omega collars, especially at formal events, and especially in the American South. Collars are conservative in nature, but not overly so, and often worn by the politically liberal as well.

Collars are engraved with the omega's family name or crest on their large flat clasp - the distinguishing mark of a collar. Collars where the clasp is blank are considered deeply embarrassing.

Omegas do not buy collars for themselves. Omega collars are given to omegas by non-omega family and mates, with a mate's collar/collar with one's most updated surname taking precedence. An omega can, however, wear their premarital/pre-mating collars without social commentary.

Omegas might not buy collars for themselves, but it isn't unusual for an omega to *choose* their own collar when out with their mate or family. (A sensible alpha will often consult their mate about most of their collars, so that the collars match the omega's outfits.)
A new tradition is starting in North America where newly bonded couples will go out shopping together to buy new collars for the beginning of their new life together.

Collars can be quite pricey or relatively cheap. They can be made of a range of materials - for example, strands of silk woven together into a flat strip. They can be garnished with pendants or other decorations as individually desired. They can be simple bands or gigantic bejewelled constructs.

The most expensive (see: priceless) collar in the world is a part of the British Crown Jewels.

Omega collars can be worn above or under clothing.

Omega collars are generally treated with more care than normal necklaces (or other types of collars). Many collars are kept in special cases, drawers or boxes, especially the stiff and elaborate ones.

*COURTING*

Giving gifts to a young unbonded omega could be construed as potentially courting them.

Gifts given by an alpha to an omega are called alpha-gifts. Discarding an alpha-gift can be hurtful - even for another, unrelated, alpha, sensitive to the original alpha's feelings.
A wise omega will judge an alpha by their gifts. If they fail in the small things, they can't be trusted with the more important things - a bad doughnut can be followed by a bad scented item that doesn't match the nest, an ugly collar.

An omega refusing to take food directly from an alpha's hand makes a point (usually declining that alpha's romantic overture). In some conservative areas, an omega taking food directly from the hand of an alpha they are not related to without some kind of formal courtship in place would be forbidden/a scandal.

*The 12 Stages of Formal Courtship*

1. The Formal Request of Courtship/Acceptance of Formal Request
2. The Gifts of Beauty, Comfort and Understanding
    1. The alpha presents a gift first, and the omega - if they accept the alpha's suit and approve of the gift - is expected to reciprocate with a similar gift.
    2. The alpha can give as many gifts as they wish at this stage, but they must give at least one gift of each type and cannot give the omega another formal gift until the omega has reciprocated the last one. The gifts are supposed to be private/personal (no tickets to performances), as the courting couple are not 'out' in public yet.
    3. Common gifts of Beauty are flowers, artisanal/decorated food and clothes, works of art and jewellery (no necklaces or rings).
    4. Common gifts of Comfort are food, (unscented) clothes, (unscented) pillows/cushions and blankets. Sometimes soft furnishings for a home.
    5. Common gifts of Understanding are items relating to the couple's interests and/or hobbies or books/tools.
3. The Family Blessing
    1. It used to be that the alpha (alone) would ask approval to continue the courtship from the omega's parents and give them (expensive) gifts, and the omega would be taken to formally meet the alpha's family and bring them something home-made (alone). If the blessing were not given by the omega's parents, the courtship could not go ahead.
    2. Now, it is much more common for the couple to work together to make/buy gifts for both families and friends, and the parents' consent is not always required.
4. The Gifts of Strength and Security
    1. At this point, the alpha is supposed to show that they are strong enough to defend their omega and future family against any opposition and keep them all safe. The omega, traditionally, only had to prove that they themselves were healthy, fertile, and devoted to the alpha, but this has fallen out of fashion.
    2. Common gifts of Strength are displays of physical strength or sporting prowess, or playing sports together. It's also very common for both alpha and omega to get a full health check at this point and share the details with their partner.
    3. Common gifts of Security are scented items, usually clothes or linen. It isn't uncommon to share house keys at this point - or buy an omega a new house, for a richer alpha.
5. The Public Announcement
    1. The first time the couple go out together in public and declare themselves to be courting. Couples from a certain social class can expect to have this remarked upon in the Society pages.
6. The Trial(s)
    1. Traditionally, the omega set the alpha a difficult but not impossible task and the alpha had to do it according to any rule the omega set. They can be romantic, arduous or demeaning… they can be anything at all.
    2. Nowadays, couples will set each other a task, and these can be anything and have time limits or not. Trials that take less than a week are frowned upon for rushing things and taking courtship too frivolously.
7. The Retreat
    1. The couple take a short - usually weekend - break away together to test their compatibility.
8. The Feast

1. It used to be that the alpha would prepare a large expensive meal for the omega as preparation to spend heat/rut together to give them both energy.
2. This evolved into the alpha cooking the omega a meal, then the omega cooking the alpha a meal. It is also common for the couple to host a big dinner for their family/friends afterwards.

9. The Presentation of Den/Building a Nest
10. The Sharing a Heat/Rut
11. The Exchange of Bites
12. The Bonding Ceremony

*FAMILY PLANNING*

Sperm and egg donors are available, though access to these varies from country to country and is not free in the USA.
Different types of surrogacy have different levels of legality throughout the USA and Commonwealth.
Fostering and adoption are available, though some potential parents (queer ones) tend to have their applications declined by highly conservative agencies.

Condoms are designed for alphas - for phalluses with knots, also called knotting condoms - and those without knots - commonly called beta condoms, though omegas use them too.

*MEDICAL*

Medical buildings are usually divided up by gender and dynamic where possible - the omega wing very separate from the others.

Medical teams - especially the nurses - for omega patients try to be predominantly omega. It's especially prioritised for omega patients who may exhibit erratic behaviour.

The only things an individual can remove from an active crime scene in the USA are those things the justice system deems essential to immediate life and livelihood. life-saving medications and equipment, enough clothing that the individual won't be out on the street

with nothing to wear, a purse/wallet and ID.
Omegas are also allowed to take a few soft, scented items to prevent what is known colloquially as a ‘dynamic drop’.

Over-the-counter and prescribed suppressants have just as many drawbacks as other medications - they can cause migraines in some people.

*EDUCATION*

There are options for children/youths who find it too difficult - for whatever reason - to normally attend school. In the USA, there’s the GED, but many states - including Minnesota - also have several online academies. (Which cost more than the GED.)
Each student has a more personalised approach to their education than what public school may provide. The curriculum is tailored around other scheduled commitments, health, and learning needs.
Despite stereotypes, online academies aren’t just for the difficult or less gifted people. Many young prodigies prefer their advanced courses, and a significant portion of their student bodies are made up of individuals with particular health needs that make it difficult for them to attend a physical school, including young alphas and omegas with complicated rut or heat cycles.

*FASHION*

Male omegas and female alphas can generally wear trousers as much as skirts and dresses (though some religions and cults disagree). Some events demand one type of dress more than another.

Anyone *can* wear make-up, but it is most commonly seen on women of all dynamics and male omegas. Male alphas might wear some form of make-up more often during pre-rut. Wearing make-up is another point on the - somewhat sexist - list for signs of improving psychological health in women and omegas.

Clothes with plunging necklines are common for omegas, designed to emphasise the throat and any collar being worn.

Shirts cut in ‘the omega style’ have low collars and a much lower neckline than a ‘normal’ shirt, designed to expose the throat and any omega collar being worn. The cuffs are tight at the wrist to cover and protect the minor scent glands there - usually buttoned, with the number of buttons denoting wealth.
Suits cut in ‘the omega style’ are very similar to British cuts. They have jackets designed to be worn over shirts designed for omegas, with small lapels that don’t obscure the neck too much, and vents at the back to emphasise the individual’s ass. The cut is close and slimming, and designed to be worn with jewellery. Waistcoats follow the same pattern. Trouser styles can vary, but tighter trousers are currently in fashion.
British omegas and omegas from most Commonwealth countries wear tighter suits with longer vents than those donned by North Americans.

Nursing omegas of all genders tend to wear wrap-style shirts and dresses with deep asymmetrical necklines.

Many Afro-American, Black British and black biracial omegas with longer hair have their hair specially braided with gold ribbons for their mating/marriage ceremonies. It is the custom to wear the ribbons for at least a week afterwards, but longer is also common and acceptable.

*THE FBI*

The FBI is still alpha-dominant. Attempts are being made to employ more betas and omegas in general, but these attempts tend to be frequently thwarted by conservative and Republican interference.

Quantico uses scent-deadening sprays as part of normal cleaning supplies. This is standard for all government buildings, but extremely helpful at the FBI Academy as the halls of the Academy are often thick with clouds of hormonal scent. Usually *alpha* hormonal scent. This makes an unfriendly environment for for everyone, but particularly for omegas and scent-sensitive betas.
The clouds of scent are thickest during the day when classes are at their most busy.

Quantico has emergency nesting rooms for those who unpredictably go into heat or rut.

Quantico has a crèche for the children/wards of agents, other staff and students. It closes at 9, when most people at the Academy have gone home. This is later than most places of business with crèches on-site choose to close, the increased hours only a result of the FBI Academy's presence on a military base. The crèche was not there when the Academy was first founded - but gender, dynamic and family rights have progressed in (comparative) leaps and bounds since then, and the safety and security of the nation cannot be endangered by single parents unable to find adequate childcare.

Quantico has a gender and dynamic sensitivity training course for trainee agents - and agents who have been reprimanded.

Agents and trainee agents have been gently discouraged from neutralising their scents with deadeners in recent years, except for some departments. It used to be that all agents had to cover up, but that was deemed to put trainees at a disadvantage. Learning how to interpret the changing scents of others is a useful law enforcement tool, and the average Joe Schmoe seems to distrust a government man in a suit that smells of nothing at all. Scent helps to remind people that they are actually talking to people under the suit. Additionally, going from neutral training grounds to strong olfactory stimuli in the field was causing freeze-ups, and not a few migraines.
The drawback to this is that the strong olfactory stimuli triggers adverse responses within the hallowed halls of its Academy instead.

# Lithuanian Society

[to be added later]

# Japanese Society

*General*

There is a general belief that all omegas are spiritual descendants of the sun goddess - and Ruler of the Heavens - Amaterasu Ōmikami (天照大御神, 天照大神) through her fifth and youngest son, Kumanokusubi (熊野久須毘命,熊野櫲樟日命, Wonder Worker of Bear Moors). Kumanousubi was born as a result of a kami-making competition between Amaterasu and her younger brother, Susanoo (スサノオ). In many versions of the tale, Susanoo chews the five jewels which Amaterasu wears in her hair - which reflect her light - and spits out five gods, of which Kumanokusubi is the last.

All Emperors of Japan are mythically descended from Amaterasu through her first son, Amenooshihomimi (天忍穗耳尊,天之忍穗耳命). Amenooshihomimi's son (and Amaterasu's grandson), Ninigi (瓊瓊杵尊), is the great-grandfather of the first emperor of Japan, Emperor Jimmu.
Only male alphas or betas may ascend to the role of emperor.
To therefore keep the bloodline of Amaterasu 'pure', an emperor may only mate and marry a single omega that has an exemplary bloodline of their own.

A royal female beta/omega or male omega that marries outside of royalty loses their royal title and status.

Tertiary genders/sub-dynamics are not generally understood in Japan, and those who identify as one are in an extremely small minority.

*Scent*

It is considered to be in extremely poor taste to completely cover up one's natural scent with perfume/cologne, and those individuals who do so are assumed to be untrustworthy for hiding such an integral part of themselves. (Situations where scent-blockers are required in sterile situations are exempt.) *Accentuating* one's natural scent with mildly-scented perfumes, lotions and accessories, however, is socially permissible for all genders and dynamics - and encouraged. Much like Japanese nobles displaying their refinement in days past by deducing the ingredients of varied incense by scent alone, it is not uncommon for individuals to display

their superior sense of taste and refinement by striving to accentuate their natural scent in the most pleasing manner - and deduce what scents their companions are using to alter *their* scents as well.
It is permissible - and actually encouraged - for individuals with extremely strong natural scents to mute their scents with scent-deadening products. Dominating an area with one's natural scent or broadcasting one's emotions too loudly via scent is seen as ignorant, shameful and embarrassing, something that should be left behind in childhood.
Because of the above, the scent industry in Japan is catered towards mild-smelling products and scent-deadening products almost in its entirety. Bespoke perfumeries are very common and actually outnumber mass-produced companies, as everyone is determined to find the most unique scent to best represent themselves.

Items strongly marked with one's own scent should only ever be given to the most *intimate* of friends, family, and partners. It is a great social humiliation should one of these scented items be mislaid and found by people they were not intended for.

*Pregnancy*

Because it is so frowned upon in Japan to cover up one's natural scent, and as omegas broadcast their pregnancies via their scent after the first trimester, it is not uncommon for pregnant omegas to be mildly harassed when out in public by busybodies/well-meaning individuals offering advice about their pregnancy. Particularly if the omega doesn't appear to be staying warm enough!
Traditionally, it is thought that the belly and feet must be kept warm, especially during pregnancy - even on the hottest and most humid days in Japan. All pregnant individuals should wear socks or leg-warmers (so that the meridian point above the ankle that connects to the uterus is covered and kept warm), scarves/shirts with high necks (so that the meridian point on the back of the neck is covered), and keep their bellies covered at all times (wearing a *sarashi*, *haraobi*, *haramaki*, girdle, or other warm cover over the midsection, because if the belly cools off the baby will catch a cold). Nightly hot baths and the use of heavy blankets at night are also recommended.

*Omamori* (Japanese: お守り) are amulets, sold in small and colourful pouches, which contain the blessings of priests and are believed to offer protection to their holder and ward off bad luck. There are many different kinds of *omamori* for many different occasions. *Anzan* (Japanese: 安産) *omamori* are intended to protect expectant mothers and their unborn child, and ensure a safe and easy delivery. Many expectant mothers receive *anzan omamori* as a gift from someone else, but it is not unusual for an expectant mother to purchase their own. There are subtle differences between the *anzan omamori* offered to female betas, female

omegas and male omegas, so, for the best protection, every gender/dynamic should own the one that fits them.
One of the most popular times to buy *anzan omamori* is on *Inu no Hi* (戌の日, or Day of the Dog) when a pregnant person reaches the fifth month of their pregnancy (by the lunar calendar). This day occurs once every 12 days. It is believed that dogs are a symbol for giving birth easily and safely as they give birth to multiple puppies at the same time.

In modern urban Japan, most parents will have their baby's DNA tested to discover the child's dynamic/secondary gender either during pregnancy or before the first week has passed in the newborn's life. This is because, when a baby is seven days old, many Japanese families host a ceremony called an *oshichiya* (Japanese: お七夜) or *meimei shiki* (Japanese: 命名式) where the baby is officially named. The child's name is given (often) taking both primary and secondary genders into account, and the child is raised in their society's gender and dynamic norms from this point onwards.
Parents who live in more rural areas have their baby's DNA tested much more rarely, and usually wait until a child's natural presentation during adolescence.

# French Society

*Language*

It was once a widespread tradition in European French to *tutoyer* (i.e, use the familiar *tu* form with) all omegas the same age or younger than oneself, regardless of their social position or familiarity to the addressee. Only with omegas *evidently* older than oneself should one *vouvoyer* (use the polite *vous* form). There has been a massive backlash against this in the past few decades by omegas who feel infantilised, but *L'Académie Française* remains stubborn and the *tutoyer*-ing of omegas persists - most particularly in Parisian and Northern French. Southern French more frequently uses the *tu* form for *everyone.*
Speakers of Québécois French and French from other parts of *La Francophonie* do not tolerate the othering of omegas in this way, and using the *tu* form ahead of time - especially with omegas - can land an individual in serious trouble.

# Italian Society

[to be added later]

# Other Societies

*Spain*

Unlike most of the Western world, the colour black is traditionally associated with *omegas* in the Iberian peninsula.
Kissing an omega dressed all in black is extremely good luck.

# Miscellaneous

*Mythology*

The annual Geminids meteor shower is the result of debris from the asteroid 3200 Phaethon. From Greek Mythology: Phaethon was an omega son of Helios, the sun god. Desperate to prove his divine lineage by displaying his prowess in imitating his biological father, Phaethon begged to be able to drive Helios' chariot - that which drove the sun across the sky. Unable to deny the pleading of his son, Helios handed the reins of his chariot to Phaethon. But Phaethon was unable to control Helios' mighty horses and the chariot went wildly off-course, scorching swathes of the earth as the sun was brought too close to the ground, freezing leagues elsewhere as the sun was driven away too far.
Only the timely intervention of one of Zeus' lightning bolts brought the wild ride to an end and spared the earth - though it claimed Phaethon's life as the cost.
Phaethon's sisters, the Heliades, gathered to mourn beside their brother's body where it had fallen in the river Eridanos. After watching them grieve for four months, the gods saw fit to turn the sisters into black poplar trees, weeping tears of amber that fell into the water.
Phaethon's alpha lover, Cycnus, King of Liguria, likewise mourned for the rest of his life on Eridanos' banks, his grief surviving the metamorphosis the gods had enacted upon him in an attempt to relieve him of his sorrow. Moved by pity, Apollo, who had once gifted Cycnus with the talent for song, transformed Cycnus into a swan - and further, after Cycnus' perpetual dirge and lonely swan-song, into the constellation Cygnus.

*Art History*

The Louvre's *Sleeping Hermaphroditus* is a male omega, as is the version in the Uffizi Gallery.

Titian's *Venus of Urbino* in the Uffizi is a painting of a female omega.
Some of the copies made after the original painting give Venus dark and impetuous waves of hair rather than gold. Many imagine Venus - or the Venus of their muse - as a courtesan or prostitute. A smaller handful imagine Venus as an omega male, a sensuous shapeshifter deity who assumes the form of beauty kept in his artist's eye.

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